



# Congressional Record

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## Senate

### CORPORAL STEPHEN M. MCGOWAN

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I would like to set aside a few moments today to reflect on the life of Stephen McGowan. Steve epitomized the best of our country's brave men and women who fought to free Iraq and to secure a new democracy in the Middle East. He exhibited unwavering courage, dutiful service to his country, and above all else, honor. In the way he lived his life--and how we remember him--Steve reminds each of us how good we can be.

A 1996 graduate of St. Mark's High School, Steve was the son of Ms. Bobbie McGowan, a personal friend of my family. Steve then attended the University of Delaware and Wilmington College, studying criminal justice. He joined the Army 3 years ago, wanting to serve in the Army partly because he could not find a job with enough challenge and adrenaline in other careers he had considered. According to his family, Steve enjoyed the challenge, especially physical challenge and the mental challenge that went with a military career--the challenge to try harder, get stronger, and push the limits. That was true in all aspects of his life. He played soccer until he graduated from high school, but when that grew too tame for him, he switched to rugby.

Steve enlisted on September 17, 2002, and was selected for combat medic training, which he pursued with distinction at the

U.S. Army Medical School at Sam Houston, Texas.

Before being deployed to Iraq, Stephen earned a parachutist badge at the U.S. Army Airborne School and served for approximately 15 months with the 2nd Infantry Division near the

DMZ in Korea. Steve volunteered to join his unit's 2nd Brigade Combat Team to spare medics with spouses and children and arrived with the unit in Kuwait in early August 2004. Within a few weeks, he deployed to Ramadi, about 45 miles west of Baghdad, where his unit supported the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and was responsible for VIP escort, area security and other ``highly operated missions." He died when an improvised explosive device detonated near his military vehicle in Ramadi, Iraq. Before returning home, Steve was awarded the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Korean Defense Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Armed Service Ribbon, and Global War on Terror Expedition Medal. A Bronze Star will be awarded posthumously.

Steve was a highly regarded young soldier. He joined the military in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom because he felt that as a single person with no children, he could go and take someone else's spot. His family

remembers him as the embodiment of pride, honor and dignity. He was admired by every man and woman he worked with and every commanding officer with whom he served. According to his sister, Michaela, ``Steve was raised with the values that you find in the military and he lived them. Steve touched so many lives and I'm so proud of the man he became."

Despite the close calls and the fact U.S. forces in Iraq are fighting insurgents who wear civilian clothes and hide among the general population, Steve and his squad carried toys and athletic equipment with them when they went on patrol. Last year, he asked family and friends to send him small items that he could hand out as gifts for Iraqi children rather than Christmas presents.

In one e-mail, he said that Iraqi girls had become entranced by the sight of some Beanie Baby dolls the soldiers handed out. The story so touched his mother, Bobbie McGowan, that she organized a Beanie Baby drive at the Charter School of Wilmington, where she is dean of humanities. Students reacted so positively to her request for the dolls that she was swamped with them. Students donated so many dolls that she had to send them to her son in small lots because he did not have room to store them all. His mother, Bobbie, takes comfort in the fact that her son had not only saved lives in Iraq as a medic but that he had also touched many more lives by passing out toys to children. This was a true testament to the kind of soldier--the kind of man--Steve was.

He was a soccer, biking, and outdoor enthusiast and will be remembered especially for his rugby adventures with the University of Delaware, the Wilmington's Men League and the 2nd Infantry Division

Rugby Club. In 2001, Steve took a trip to New Zealand while accompanying his rugby mate who was exploring professional rugby opportunities. Steve's favorite team was the All Blacks. Traveling in New Zealand gave him the opportunity to do what he loved--experience new cultures and have a new adventure.

This tragedy strikes particularly close to home. Stephen's mother, Bobbie, is a highly regarded member of the faculty at the Charter School of Wilmington, where our sons attend high school. Steve's death is a terrible blow to his family and a source of deep sorrow for those of us privileged to know his family. I rise today to commemorate Steve, to celebrate his life, and to offer his family our support and our deepest sympathy on their tragic loss.